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I.—CHANSONS DE GESTE AND THE HOMERIC PROBLEM.

In 1795 when Wolf published his "Prolegomena" and thus first called to the attention of scholars the problem as to the origin and composition of the Iliad and the Odyssey, the Old French epic poems, known generally as "chansons de geste," had been forgotten for centuries. But almost as soon as the manuscripts of these poems began to be noticed, their similarity in form and matter to the Greek epos was at once apparent. It was a classical scholar, Immanuel Bekker, who in 1829 published the first edition of a chanson de geste, the Provençal "Fierabras." Bekker instituted later a detailed comparison¹ between Homeric and Old French customs, culture and modes of expression. A similar comparison was made by Littré² in France, who in 1841 went so far as to translate into the language and meter of the chansons the first book of the Iliad, an interesting, if not very successful, *tour de force*. Since then almost every Homeric critic has cited the chansons, and their evidence has been adduced on both sides of the century-old controversy, by the "unitarians" as well as by the "chorizontes," by Lang and Drerup as well as by Cauver and Gilbert Murray. But generally these comparisons have been made without intimate and extensive knowledge of the vast mass of epic material contained in the Old French manuscripts. Murray, for instance, relies entirely on G. Paris' "Manuel" and small edition of the *Chanson de Roland*, Lang on Gautier's "Epo-

¹ I. Bekker, Vergleichung homerischer und altfranzösischer Sitten, in Monatsber. d. Berl. Akad. d. Wiss., 1866, and, Homerische Ansichten und Ausdrucksweisen mit altfranzösischen zusammengestellt, *ibid.*, 1867.

² E. Littré, La poésie homérique et l'ancienne poésie française, in Rev. des deux mondes, 1847; reprinted in: Histoire de la langue française, 1862, I, 301ff.

pées," Drerup on Rajna's "Origini." So it seems to me that a comparison from the other viewpoint may not be without interest to classical scholars. In the following pages then I intend to indicate and discuss some analogies between the Greek and the French epics, from the standpoint of a student of the latter. I shall by no means indicate all the parallels that might be drawn. That would be an almost endless task, especially in matters of social and institutional history, modes of thought and expression. My design now is to illustrate certain moot points of Homeric criticism by materials taken from the *chansons de geste*.

In the last thirty years the critical study of Homer has been greatly modified by the discovery of new archaeological and anthropological evidence. The excavations in Troy, Mycenae and Crete have proved that there existed, at a time preceding the traditional date of the Trojan War, a rich and well developed civilization. Homer's description of the wealth and power of Mycenae and Troy now seems, if anything, to be inferior to the reality. At the same time closer investigation of the cults of ancient Greece has disclosed the existence of a mass of beliefs, rites and customs unknown to, or ignored by, Homer. There has been likewise a shifting of views in regard to the evolution and composition of the poems. Lachmann's "Kleinlieder" theory is almost entirely given up. While the majority of the critics cling to the Wolfian hypothesis to the extent that it presupposes a long, traditional "Vorgeschichte" to the Iliad and Odyssey, I suppose that few of them would now care to deny that at some stage of the process a great poet was at work, shaping and transforming, by his own genius, the legendary material. Nor, on the other hand, do "Unitarians" like Lang and Drerup deny the possibility of interpolations and reworkings, to a limited extent, of the original poems. The present problem, I take it, is this: whether or not the Homeric poems are the result of a long process of evolution, and whether the different "strata" or moments of that evolution can be distinguished in the poems themselves. A secondary but related problem is that of the credibility of the poems in respect to the cultural and political history contained in them. For both these questions we find abundant illustrative analogies in the *chansons de geste*.

The later poems in their turn occupy by no means the position they once filled in the eyes of the student of epic origins. Till the days when M. Joseph Bédier published his epoch-making "*Légendes épiques*," we were all, more or less, convinced that the chansons likewise were the final product of a long, but hidden, process of development. Going back to traditions or sagas, in verse form or otherwise, contemporaneous with the events they record, they had, in the course of the ages, dropped or distorted their original kernels of historic truth, incorporated disparate elements of various provenance, undergone constant rehandling, interpolation and excision, all by oral transmission, till finally, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, they were fixed in writing in the form we now possess.³ It is, I think, safe to say that M. Bédier's brilliant criticism has not left one stone of this theoretical edifice standing. There is absolutely no trustworthy evidence that an epic tradition about Charlemagne and the heroes associated with him existed in France prior to 1050 A. D.⁴ Whether the positive results of M. Bédier's investigations, the dependence of the authors of the chansons on the "clercs" of the pilgrim shrines and routes, are equally certain, I do not purpose here to inquire. For my comparisons I intend to accept fully his main contention: the French epics were "*nées au XI^e siècle seulement; nous les possédons en des versions identiques ou fort ressemblantes aux versions originales.*" For the purposes of this paper I shall go even farther than M. Bédier; I shall not assume the existence of any lost versions whatsoever, except in so far as study of the rimes shows copying, though I believe that in some cases they undoubtedly existed. It is ill arguing from one unknown to another unknown. The unknown quantity in the Homeric problem is the material—myths, history, ballads, long poems, prose sagas, or what not—that lies behind the preserved Iliad and Odyssey. So I assume no unknown material at all behind the French epics. I simply take what is preserved in them, and I then

³ This theory has been stated most fully in the various works of the late G. Paris; see also Rajna, *passim*, and Voretzsch, *Einführung*, pp. 108-136, 195-257.

⁴ For Bédier's unanswered criticism of the texts previously adduced in favor of the older theory, see *Lég. ép.* I, 171ff., II, 349ff., III, 195ff., IV, 289ff.

proceed to question this known quantity as to how it may elucidate the unknown quantity in the Greek epos.

The epic material in Old French is contained in about ninety chansons, ranging in length from a few hundred to twenty thousand or more verses. These chansons are preserved in manuscripts of various date, none of which however goes back farther than the second half of the twelfth century. Criteria of language and historical allusions enable us to fix the date of composition of most of the versions of which our manuscripts are copies. It is a conservative estimate to say that the earliest chansons were composed in the first years of the twelfth century, the latest before the middle of the fourteenth.⁵ The manuscripts are in most cases somewhat later. For instance, *Aiquin*, a poem of the twelfth century, is preserved only in one manuscript of the fifteenth. For each chanson, we possess from one to thirteen manuscript copies, often differing considerably from one another in respect to dialect, wording and details of narrative. There was, furthermore, a constant tendency to group the songs together in cycles or "gestes" dealing with the same hero or family of heroes.⁶ In such matters as versification, style, vocabulary and "atmosphere," our poems are remarkably homogeneous. The legendary events narrated in them are associated with Charlemagne or his immediate predecessors or successors (with a few exceptions),⁷ being thus, as with Homer, supposed to occur in a distant and heroic past when men were mightier than they are now. The general theme of all is either the national and religious struggle against the Saracen, or else the strife of the feudal nobles with the kings or with one another.⁸ It will be seen from this brief recapitulation how vast a mass of epic material we have pre-

⁵ Formerly it was thought that the *Roland*, the *Pélerinage de Charlemagne*, possibly also *Gormont et Isembart*, dated from 1070-1090, but now opinion is tending to the belief that no chanson is earlier than the First Crusade (1096-1099).

⁶ This cyclic tendency went farthest in the case of the "geste de Guillaume" and the short "geste des Lorrains;" the others are artificial.

⁷ Exceptions are: the "cycle de la Croisade," *Floovant*, of which the hero is a supposed Merovingian, and *Hugues Capet*, late and unhistorical.

⁸ Typical poems in each of these classes are: *Roland*, *Renaut de Montauban*, *Raoul de Cambrai*.

served in the chansons de geste. Now let us see what parallels they present to the Homeric poems.

In the first place, in matters of text and language, it is at once apparent that the chansons represent a stage anterior to that of the Homeric vulgate. The text of all of them is remarkably fluid, subject as it was to the whims of each successive copyist or "remanieur." The variants in the MS tradition are more numerous and more serious than is the case for Homer. Take for instance one of the least altered chansons, *Aymeri de Narbonne* (4708 lines, early thirteenth century). We possess of this song five manuscripts, which agree in only 281 verses of the first thousand. Moreover, as compared with the critical text, MS A¹ shows a *plus* of 21 and a *minus* of 20 full lines, MS A² a *plus* of 37 and a *minus* of 33, MS B¹ a *plus* of 19 and a *minus* of 126, MS B² a *plus* of 25 and a *minus* of 125. In most cases, the proportion of variant or redundant lines is far greater than this. For example, *Hervi de Metz*, a late chanson, without "traditional" elements, is preserved in three manuscripts. Of these, MSS T and N have long interpolations in the middle and at the end of the poem. Besides, in the first thousand lines, without long interpolations, the three MSS agree absolutely in only 11 lines; and T shows a *plus* of 26, a *minus* of 3, N, a *plus* of 84 and a *minus* of 18, E, a *plus* of 54 and a *minus* of 55. This will suffice, I think, to show the fluidity of the textual tradition. In the case of the older chansons like *Roland*, *Aliscans*, *Renaut de Montauban* and others, the interpolations and changes are much more numerous. I shall discuss some of them more fully when I come to consider the possibility of multiple composition or reworking.

As compared then with the vulgate Homer, our chansons show an extremely "fluid" text, somewhat like, for example, that presented by some of the papyrus manuscripts of Homer lately discovered in Egypt.* The difference is easily explainable. None of the French epics ever became a public and national "bible," none (till nineteenth-century scholars got hold of them) was worked over by scholars interested in their text. The chansons have in their past no Aristarchus, no Zenodotus, not even a Pisistratus (be it said with all due reserve as to the question of a "Pisistratean redaction"). They are then

* See Cauer, 27ff., Murray, 302ff.

comparable only with a very early "Homer," an "ante-Pisistratean" phase, when the text was not fixed, when the great poems were hardly distinguished from the mass of the epic cycle, when tradition as well as text was developing and formless. What the chansons teach us in this connection is, that in epochs of epic "fermentation" text is less stable than tradition, which in its turn, as we shall see, is subject to reworking, and that free poetic invention is constantly at work.

Much more important is the evidence supplied by the chansons as to the question of the Homeric dialect.¹⁰ As is well known, the language of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is by no means homogeneous. The predominant dialect form of the poems is Ionic, but Aeolic words and forms constantly recur, and there is some evidence of an "Attic recension." To account for this mixture, three hypotheses have been proposed: 1, That the epos was composed when Aeolic and Ionic were not differentiated; what we find in Homer is the original "Achaean" dialect, modified somewhat by transmission (Agar, Allen, E. Meyer). 2, That the poems were originally composed in a territory on the boundary of the two dialects and that Homer's language is a sort of "Mischbildung," showing a knowledge of both (Drerup). 3, That the "Aeolisms" of Homer are relics of the dialect in which the poems were composed; that the primitive Homer was an Aeolian and the poems were later transposed into Ionic (Fick, Murray).

Now this mixture of forms belonging to several dialects is a fact familiar to every student of the *chansons de geste*. Hardly a single version is written in an absolutely "pure" dialect form. No copyist, apparently, hesitated to introduce forms and words of his own dialect into his text, or made any effort to preserve carefully the original orthography and syntax. Of course, this is merely another proof of the fluidity of the text, and as such serves to illustrate what may have happened to Homer in the ages before Pisistratus. Frequently, by careful observation of assonance, rime and measure of verse, it is possible to deduce the dialect of the original version of which we have only the copy. The scribe often writes the rime-word in his own orthography, but rarely takes the trouble to make a new rime. So it is not difficult to restore the dialect of the

¹⁰ See Cauer, 147ff., Drerup, 218ff.

author, and this is frequently done by modern editors. For instance, three very early chansons, *Roland*, the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, and *Gormont et Isebart* are preserved in Anglo-Norman manuscripts, and the orthography is prevailingly Anglo-Norman. But a study of the versification and rimes shows that none of these poems was written in Anglo-Norman, but in a continental dialect which may be restored without much disturbance of the text of the manuscripts.¹¹ In the case of the *Roland* alone are versions preserved in other dialects, one being in the artificial "Franco-Italian" speech-form of which I shall say something later. Of two songs, *Orson de Beauvais* and *Floovant*, we possess only two manuscripts written by Lorrainese copyists. The orthography is marked by distinctive Lorrainese peculiarities, but a study of the rimes and versification proves that the original poet was not a Lorrainer but a native of another province.

Thus, a mixture of forms belonging to different dialects is common in the manuscripts of most chansons. This mixture is generally due, as I have shown, to the copyists, but in some cases at least is to be ascribed to the author. *Girart de Roussillon*, according to Paul Meyer,¹² was written originally in a dialect lying on the boundary between French and Provençal, and shows a mixture of both languages. Later manuscripts show, in one case, almost pure North-French speech-forms, in another, equally pure Provençal. The *Prise de Cordres*, written by a Champenois, shows many Central-French forms, due undoubtedly to the author. The unique manuscript is the work of a Lorrainer, who has introduced many Lorrainese forms.¹³

¹¹ This has been done, e. g., by G. Paris in his "Extraits de la chanson de Roland," and by Bayot in his edition of *Gormont et Isebart*. Since writing the above, I have been able to study the work of Gertrud Wacker, *Ueber das Verhältnis von Dialekt und Schriftsprache im Altfranzösischen* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der romanischen Sprachen und Literaturen, No. 11), Halle, 1916, which deserves the attention of all who discuss the language used by Old French poets. Miss Wacker proves, quite conclusively, that most of these poets wrote in an artificial *koivê*—that of the Anglo-Norman and French courts—and deliberately, though not entirely or consistently, suppressed dialectal peculiarities. She does not, however, consider many of the chansons de geste. Her results do not modify essentially the statements made above.

¹² See the Introduction to his translation of the poem, 180ff.

¹³ See Densusianu, Introduction to his edition, 124ff.

Orson de Beauvais was composed probably by a native of the Beauvaisis, but he introduced into his work many "Francien" forms. The manuscript shows an incoherent mixture of three dialects, those of the Ile-de-France, the Beauvaisis, and Lorraine, the last due to the copyist.¹⁴ It is now generally admitted that later poets frequently sought to write in "buen françois," Parisian, though they necessarily retained many traces of their native speech.

The most remarkable instances of dialect-mixture occur in cases where the author or copyist was not a Frenchman, but a Provençal or an Italian. Thus, *Fierabras*, a chanson composed in French and preserved in four manuscripts in that speech, was at an early date transposed into Provençal, and we have of this version one manuscript of the thirteenth century.¹⁵ In its rimes, this manuscript presents a bizarre confusion of Provençal and French forms, due to the incapacity of the translator and his desire to keep the rimes of the original. Again, *Daurel et Beton* is a poem composed undoubtedly by a Provençal minstrel. He has however introduced into his text a large number of French words and forms, due in this case to the fact that at this time French was the accepted epic speech and that most of the poems the author was acquainted with were in that dialect.¹⁶ But where dialect-mixture goes farthest is in the case of the so-called "Franco-Italian" poems. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the popularity of the French chansons was so great that the minstrels and poets of North Italy began to give them a dress which should make them more familiar to the ear of their Italian hearers. For this purpose, a curious jargon, half French, half Italian, was devised, which does not correspond to any known speech-form. This wholly artificial poetic language has been called Franco-Italian by modern scholars. In it are preserved versions of several well-known French epics, notably the *Roland*. One chanson, *Macaire*, exists only in this form, but is undoubtedly an adaptation of a French original.¹⁷ Later, in the fourteenth century, original poems, dealing with the same epic legends, were composed in this dialect by native

¹⁴ See G. Paris, *Introduct.* pp. VII ff.

¹⁵ See Kroeber et Servois, in the preface to their edition, VI ff.

¹⁶ See P. Meyer, *Introduct.* to edition, 36 ff.

¹⁷ See Guessard, *Preface* to his edition, XV ff.

Italians. Such a one is, for example, the *Entrée d'Espagne*,¹⁸ a long and spirited poem intended to serve as an introduction to the *Chanson de Roland*, and composed by a Paduan.

A knowledge of the dialect relations in the chansons de geste would have prevented or modified some rather dogmatic assertions by Homeric scholars. Thus, T. W. Allen, in his recent Encyclopaedia Britannica article on Homer,¹⁹ affirms that Fick's theory, according to which originally Aeolic poems were transposed into Ionic, is impossible, because such an event would be "unique in history." But in the history of the French epos such transposition is extremely common, as we have seen. Similarly Agar²⁰ claims that the idea that the epic dialect is an artificial poetic medley, Ionic in the main with some intermixture of other dialects, is "frankly impossible." The idea was not impossible to any Provençal or North Italian poet of the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

This exposition has shown, I think, that the chansons offer no support, by analogy, to the theory that Homer's language represents an original Achæan dialect, out of which Aeolic, Ionic and Attic were developed. But they do present examples of dialect-mixture due to either of the two causes adduced to account for the linguistic conditions of the Homeric poems. In most cases, however, the confusion in them is due to later copyists or adapters, and therefore tends to confirm, by analogy, the justice of the views of Fick and his followers.

A great deal of attention has been given by recent criticism to what may be called "cultural evolution" in the Homeric poems.²¹ As "traditional books" they have been thought to show traces of the development in institutions, manners and beliefs through which the race which produced them passed. A great amount of work of this character has been done, though critics are by no means in accord as to what the results prove. Some think that the poems show an evident mixture of old and new conditions, due partly to "expurgation," partly to retention of traditional features, partly to conscious or unconscious

¹⁸ As to this poem, and the "Franco-Italian" jargon in general, see the exhaustive account of A. Thomas, in the introduction to his edition.

¹⁹ 11th edition, Vol. XIII, p. 632.

²⁰ In his recent work, *Homericæ*, Oxford, 1908.

²¹ See especially Murray, 136ff., Cauer, 259ff., Lang, *Homer and his Age*, 6ff.

archaizing. Others think that the picture of life presented by Homer is unified and harmonious, though here again with sharp differences of opinion as to the date of the society thus portrayed. The chansons present in this connection some curious analogies to the Iliad and Odyssey, and also considerable indirect evidence as to the possibility of "expurgation" and "archaisms" in the popular epic.

But first a word should be said in regard to the chansons as "traditional books." There is no evidence that the manuscripts of these poems were ever numerous. Most of those preserved belong to one of two classes: small, portable codices, the property of the minstrels who used them to refresh their memory; or, secondly, large, costly volumes, generally cyclic, designed for some nobleman's library.²² There is some evidence to show that the "jongleurs" guarded their manuscripts jealously. But there is no proof that any chanson was ever considered as a holy book, of importance to the race. Notwithstanding their wide popularity, their quasi-historical character (generally credited at the time, as the Pseudo-Turpin,²³ other chronicles and especially the forged monastic charters containing names of epic heroes as witnesses show), the chansons never became official or sacred documents. They were entertainment, not instruction. And as time went on, this popular character increased. The cultivated aristocracy, which during the twelfth and part of the thirteenth centuries had heard the songs gladly, turned away from them. The latest compositions, notwithstanding the efforts of certain court-minstrels like Adenet le Roi²⁴ to give them an aristocratic tone, are bourgeois, not to say vulgar, in style.²⁵ They never became, as the Greek epos did, objects of national reverence and study; there is no Pan-Athenaeon festival in their history.

In such circumstances, it is idle to expect much "expurgation"²⁶ in the chansons. Notwithstanding the numerous revisions they underwent, it is not often that we can say definitely that a certain change is due to a change in the ethical feeling

²² See Gautier, *Epopées*, II, 48ff.

²³ See Bédier, III, 42ff.

²⁴ Author of two rehandled epics, *Berte au grand pied* and *Bueve de Commarchis*.

²⁵ Such are, for example, *Hugues Capet* and *Baudouin de Sebourg*.

²⁶ See Murray, 141ff.

of the poets. But we can see such a process at work in some instances. One of the best-known episodes in the French epos is William of Orange's visit to King Louis in search of aid. The hero arrives at court in sorry state, and is at first mocked and derided. But he succeeds in so impressing Louis that the latter eventually promises assistance. Then Queen Blanche-fleur, William's sister, intervenes against her brother, whereat the latter turns upon her, upbraids her violently, and finally threatens her life. In the earliest version of this story (*Chanson de Guillaume*, 2592-2626) the Queen accuses William of seeking the crown and says that his wife Guiborc, who was "née en païs nisme," designs to poison the King. Thereupon William "a poi n'esraga d'ire," and in a speech whose coarseness of language is unexampled in the French epos, accuses his sister of numberless adulteries and of thinking of naught but her lust and greed. In the second version (*Aliscans*, 2767-2799), Blanche-fleur omits all mention of poisoning, and William's speech is softened considerably. In the third version (*Foucon de Candie*, 6688-6768), the Queen, who is not at court, receives the news by letter; then, in a speech of great charm, but based in substance on the preceding versions, she finally recognizes William's merit and consents to Louis' departure. This is evidently a case of expurgation, as Murray uses the term. Another is found in Jehan Bodel's poem *Les Saisnes* (The Saxons). In the two earlier manuscripts is found a narrative relating the disgraceful conduct of the wives of the heroes. These ladies "as qex et as sergentz faisoient lor deliz," while their husbands are warring with the infidel Saxons. The third manuscript omits all the verses (1186-1193, 1639-1773) referring to this episode. But in most cases it is very difficult to determine whether a desire to expurgate or some other motive causes the change. It should also be remembered that there is no background of savagery, of primitive cults and creeds, behind the French legends. Advance in civilisation doubtless occurred in the centuries in which the epos flourished, but that advance found other modes of expression. So that the evidence of the chansons as to expurgation is doubtful.

As to cultural archaisms or archaizing, however, the case is decidedly different. As this is a much debated question in Homeric criticism, I shall discuss it at some length, especially

since the chansons present some curious parallels. Many critics think that indications of two distinct stages in culture can be detected in Homer, an early or "Mycenaean" period agreeing substantially with that disclosed by the archeological discoveries of recent years, and another later stage, agreeing with the ordinary Ionic Greek culture of the sixth century B. C. Some scholars deny these differences altogether; some explain them as the result of a long poetical development which retained some primitive features found in the original "Achaean" lays; still others consider the archaic features the result of conscious archaizing on the part of the Ionic Homer (or Homers).

Now as to archaisms or archaizing in general, it must be said that the evidence of the chansons de geste is directly contrary to anything of the sort. Nothing is more characteristic of the naive medieval poet—whether minstrel or clerk matters not—than his total incapacity to imagine a society or a civilisation different from his own. This trait is most marked, of course, in those poems which borrow their "matter" from antiquity. In the *Roman de Troie*,²⁷ for example (based on Dictys and Dares), or the *Roman de Thèbes*²⁸ (based on Statius' *Thebais*), the heroes, named in this case Hector, Achilles, Adrastus or Tydeus, fight on horseback with lances and are armed with hauberk, helm and oblong shield, exactly like Roland or the contemporary knights of the crusading epoch. In the case of the chansons de geste, every attempt to show the existence in them of cultural archaisms has been vain. All the traits of the life described in them, political, social, religious, agree with those of the feudal society of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and with nothing else. They do not ever agree, save in representing Charlemagne as "emperor" and a mighty ruler, with those of the Frankish, pre-feudal society of the age of Charles the Great and Louis I. And when changes in culture occur, the poet puts these changes, when they concern his "matter," naively into his picture of the heroic age. A striking but crude illustration of this tendency is the reference to "cordeliers et jacobins" (Franciscan and Dominican friars) put into the

²⁷ About 1160, by Benoit de Sainte Maure, pub. by Constans, 6 vols. Paris, 1904-12.

²⁸ Early twelfth century, anonymous, published by Constans, 2 vols. Paris, 1890.

mouth of a baron of Charlemagne in *Gaydon*,²⁹ a chanson of the early thirteenth century. Neither order was established in France till after 1200. The chansons do not, of course, present a complete and accurate picture of feudal society as a whole. Many traits are neglected or distorted, this being especially noticeable in the treatment of church matters. Now let us consider some special cases where the parallel between medieval France and Homeric Greece is well marked.

First, as to writing. It is well known that Homer makes only one doubtful allusion to that art.³⁰ Earlier critics believed that this showed that the Greeks were ignorant of the art of writing till after the composition of the poems, so that the latter must once have existed as a purely oral production. The recent discoveries in Crete have refuted this assumption; there is now no doubt that writing was known to the Aegean peoples at a date long anterior to that usually given of the Trojan War. How then account for Homer's apparent ignorance of it? E. Meyer and Wilamowitz regard this ignorance as a deliberate archaism. The poet or poets suppressed all reference to writing and letters. Here the example of the chansons may teach us caution. Notwithstanding the knowledge of writing, books and letters prevalent in feudal France (a knowledge far more widely spread than is generally supposed), the references to writing in the chansons are singularly scanty. Generally, it is mentioned only when the king or baron summons his men to join him, when he sends out "ses bries et ses chartres." Thus in *Aymeri de Narbonne* (4708 lines) writing (or, the same thing for our purpose, books and reading) is mentioned only three times, in *Raoul de Cambrai* (8726 lines) four times. These references in *Raoul* are interesting: two, lines 1305 and 1506, are allusions to a book, a "sautier," owned by a nun; one, line 1795, is a boast by one of the heroes that his enemy's death is "escribe el grant fer de ma lance," written on his lance's point; the other, line 5538, is one of the usual kind, the king ordering his "escrivains" (variant, "chapelains"), to "faire mes chartres." In the late and unoriginal *Gui de Bourgogne* the only allusion to the art is the statement (line 1666) by Archbishop Turpin

²⁹ *Gaydon*, 6456: *Et cordeliers et jacobins batez.*

³⁰ In Z, 168-169. See Cauer, 260ff., Drerup, 70ff.

that he is "bons clers letrez," a good clerk knowing his letters. I wonder if the epithets applied to Kalchas (N 70) *θεοπρόπος οἰωνοστής* do not imply just as much,—or as little. In *Parise la Duchesse* (3107 lines, late) the only allusion is the statement (line 965) that the young son of the heroine Parise "aprist a letres tant qu'il en sot assez." Lastly it might be mentioned that in the very early first part of the *Chanson de Guillaume* (1983 lines) there is not one allusion to books, reading or writing. All this proves of course that books and writing did not much interest the poets of the chansons, nor their public. Might not the same be said of Homer?

Another much disputed question in the cultural relations of Homer is that of armor.³¹ Some scholars contend that there is clear evidence that two sorts of armor can be distinguished, used by the heroes of the Homeric poems, an earlier "Mycenaean" kind consisting of a helmet and huge, figure-8 shield, but no body-armor; the other, that of the later Greeks of the classical age, helm, round shield, greaves, corselet. Many critics claim that the lines referring to round shields, greaves and corselets are inorganic, interpolated by the redactors. Now the medieval system of defensive armor likewise underwent changes,³² which are reflected in the epic poems, but *not* in the same poem. Originally, the feudal knight was protected by a helm, a plain, oblong shield and a byrny (broigne). The latter was a long leather tunic on which rings of iron were sewed. In the eleventh century the "broigne" was gradually supplanted by the "haubert" or mail-shirt. The shield became broader and was painted with a "blazon" or coat of arms. Later, in the early fourteenth century, plate armor began to replace mail. Now the earlier chansons use the words "broigne" and "haubert" as synonymous, but before the end of the twelfth century the poets give up entirely the use of the former term. In the earlier chansons also, the shields are "peinz à flors," but there is no mention of armorial bearings. The earliest mention of the latter is in the *Prise d'Orange*, a chanson which dates from

³¹ See Murray, 173 ff., Cauer, 270 ff., Reichel, *Homerische Waffen*, 2d ed. Vienna, 1901.

³² See especially L. Gautier, *La Chevalerie*, 705ff., Enlart, *Manuel d'archéologie française*, III, 451 ff.

about 1160, just the time when the first blazoned shields appear on funeral effigies, etc. The coincidence is striking, though I fear it will bring no comfort to those who believe in an archaizing epic. Still more noteworthy is the fact that in the few late chansons which date from the fourteenth century the heroes begin to wear plate armor, as in *Baudouin de Sebourc* (vol. II, p. 350): "après le jaserant qu'a maint estour porta, unes plates d'achier par desseure lacha."³³ Everywhere then in the Old French epic we find the poet dressing his heroes in the armor of his own day. Nowhere does any "Carolingian" armor occur, though naturally Saracens and heathen sometimes wear outlandish devices, and there is one attempt (*Otinél*, 300ff.) to describe a huge, elaborate shield, possibly a reminiscence of the shield of Aeneas.³⁴

Professor Gilbert Murray, in his discussion of this question, cites two identical passages in the *Iliad* as proving the "inorganic" character of the verses referring to the corselet. These are the lines:³⁵

διὰ μὲν ἀσπίδος ἦλθε φαεινῆς ὄβριμον ἔγχος,
καὶ διὰ θώρηκος πολυδαίδαλον ἡρήρευστο ·
ἀντικρὺν δὲ παρὰ λαπάρην διάμυσε χιτῶνα
ἔγχος · ὁ δ' ἐκλίνθη καὶ ἀλεύατο κῆρα μέλαιναν.

which he translates as follows:

"Right through the shining shield the strong spear came
(And drove heavily through the richly-wrought corselet)
And straight on beside his flank it cut through his tunic.
That spear did: but he twisted aside and escaped black death."

Murray says apropos of this:³⁶ "Without the bracketed line the sense is clear. But with it? Does not every reader feel some difference. You can twist aside from a spear that is coming through your shield, but not from one that has driven heavily through your breastplate." Ergo, to him, the "thorex-line"

³³ "After the coat of mail which he had worn in many a battle, he laced on some plates of steel over it."

³⁴ As to Virgilian and other classical reminiscences in the chansons, see Wilmotte, *Le Français a la tête épique*, 99ff.

³⁵ Γ, 358ff.; H, 252ff.

³⁶ See Murray, 177.

is an interpolation, as all "thorex-lines" are. Now as it happens we have an almost exact parallel to this passage, in a well-known scene of the Old French epos, the fight between William and the giant Saracen Corsolt in the *Couronnement de Louis* (lines 966-973):

Un dart molu a pris a son arçon,
 Envers Guillelme le lança de randon,
 Si bruit li cols come uns alerions.
 Li cuens guenchi, qui dota le felon,
 Porquant li trenche son escu a lion;
 La vieille broigne ne li fist guarison,
 Lez le costé li passe a tel randon
 Que d'autre part fiert dous piez el sablon.

which may be translated:

He (Corsolt) took a sharp dart from his saddle-bow;
 Toward William he hurled it violently,
 The cast shrilled like an eagle.
 The Count, who feared the knave, twisted aside,
 Natheless it cut through his lion-painted shield,
 His old byrny saved him not,
 Close to his flank it passed so violently
 That on the other side it stuck two feet in the sand.

Here we find almost the same sequence of events as in Homer, save that the "twisting aside" is placed, more logically, before the piercing of the shield. The spear cuts through the shield and then the corselet, grazing the side of the hero; but he, like Alexander, "twisted aside and escaped black death." No one could possibly claim, however, that the byrny-line is here a late interpolation. Personally, I cannot feel any difficulty in either case. A similar passage occurs in *Jourdain de Blaye*, 1912-1918:

Brandist la hanste au fer tranchant molu
 Et fiert Jordain au vermoil de l'escu,
 Desoz la boucle li a fraint et fendu,
 Le bon hauberc desmaillie et rompu.
 Lez le costel li passe le fer nu,
 Dex le garist, qu'en char ne l'a feru.

"He brandished the lance-shaft with sharp cutting point and smote Jourdain on the red of his shield; under the boss he shattered and split it, rent and broke the good hauberk. Close to his flank he drives the bare iron. But God protected him, so

that he did not wound his flesh." Here no "twisting aside" is mentioned; the spear passes through shield and corselet, but God saves the hero. This seems to me more awkward than anything in Homer; but the awkwardness cannot be removed by excising the hauberk-line. Why should similar lines be considered interpolations in the *Iliad*?

Marriage settlements form another criterion for distinguishing early and late "strata" in Homer, according to some critics.³⁷ They allege that in primitive Greece men bought their wives for a price, while in the classical age the father gave a dowry with his daughter when she married. Most of the heroes seem to follow the older custom, paying bride-gifts for their wives; but there are some cases where a dowry provided by the bride's father is mentioned. A similar difference in marriage customs prevailed in medieval France, and is reflected in the epos; but the difference there was local, not temporal.³⁸ Some provinces, especially in the South, clung to the Roman "dos" system; others had adopted the Teutonic custom by which the husband dowered the wife. This gift was called the "douaire" or the "oscle." Most of the poems mention the latter custom. For example, Aymeri de Narbonne, when he took to wife Hermengarde, the Lombard king's daughter, is asked by his uncle to name her dowry. He answers:

Dist Aymeris: "Bien en ert asenée:
Premierement soit Nerbone nommée,
Et Biaulandois et Biaulande la lée,
Car en doaire fu ma mere donée.
Or resoit hui Hermenjart delivrée." ³⁹

"Said Aymeri: 'Well will she be dowered: First let Narbonne be named, and Beaulandais and Beaulande the wide, for that was given as dowry to my mother. Now let it be granted to Hermengarde.'" Here we see the bride receiving as her "douaire" the husband's mother's dowry, and in addition a city conquered by the latter. On the other hand, when King Louis

³⁷ Murray, 185ff., Cauer, 286ff.

³⁸ See Gautier, *La Chevalerie*, 357ff., Viollet, *Histoire du droit civil français*, 826ff., 849ff.

³⁹ *Aymeri de Narbonne*, 4438ff.

gives his sister in marriage to Elie of Saint-Gilles, in the chanson of that name, he bestows on her as her "dot":

Asses castieus et fermetés
Orliens et Behorges qu'est dame des chités.*

"castles and strongholds in abundance, Orléans, and Bourges, the queen of cities." So likewise in *Amis et Amiles*, when Charlemagne gives his daughter Belissant to Amiles, he says to her:

Belissans bele, dex vos a fait aiue,
Servez Amile com sa fame et sa drue.
Riviers li doins, s'il devant moi voz jure,
Ma grant cité desor l'eve de Dunne.⁴

"Fair Belissant, God hath helped you, serve Amile as his wife and his love. I give him Riviers, if he pledge you before me, my great city on the Dunne water." These customs are of course not quite the same as those of Homeric Greece. The "douaire" was not given to the bride's family, but to the bride herself, and remained hers in case of her husband's death. But the co-existence, both in history and epos, of these two customs should be sufficient to raise a doubt as to whether *ἐδνα* in Homer constitute a really archaic trait.

These analogies might be pursued further, but enough has been adduced, I think, to show how necessary it is to be cautious in discussing such data. A scholar intimately acquainted with the chansons, or with other medieval poetry, would find it very difficult to accept the possibility of cultural archaisms or archaizing in a "popular" epic; and by "popular" I mean one destined to appeal by public recitation to the people as a whole. In fact, far from retaining or introducing archaic traits, the chansons are remarkable for the tendency to introduce neologisms in customs or institutions. Each new poet, each "remanieur," never hesitates to mention a characteristic of his own time and to ascribe it boldly to the age of Charlemagne. I have already mentioned religious orders as one example of this. Another is the mention, frequent in the chansons after about 1150, of "bourgeois" and "communes." These, the

* *Elie de Saint Gilles*, 2205ff.

⁴ *Amis et Amiles*, 1756ff.

chartered free towns and their self-governing citizens, were first recognized as a definite social organization in Northern France in the first half of the twelfth century.⁴² We find allusions to them in a number of chansons, notably in the early and popular *Chevalerie Ogier* (3816-18):

Li borgois ont la grant cloque sonée
E la petite tot d'une randonée
E la comugne est tantost asanlée.

"The burgesses have rung the big bell and the little one, all in one peal, and the commune is assembled straightway." In *Orson de Beauvais* the burgesses of Beauvais play a considerable part. In regard to this, Gaston Paris says:⁴³ "Il y a certainement là un souvenir des interventions fréquentes du roi, au XII siècle, dans les démêlés des seigneurs avec les communes." In some of the later chansons the "bourgeois" are glorified at the expense of the nobles.

Another striking analogy in custom, though it does not contribute essentially to the "problem," is presented by the position taken by the minstrel,⁴⁴ the *αοιδός*, and by the allusions to songs and singing. One instance is found in the French epos of a hero, like Achilles in I, "taking his pleasure of a loud lyre . . . delighting his soul and singing the glories of heroes." This is found in *Renaut de Montauban*, 6459ff. Renaut and his three brothers are riding, unarmed, to meet the Emperor, who intends to seize them treacherously.

Aalars et Guichars commencerent un son,
Gasconois fu li dis et limosins li ton
Et Richars lor bordone belement par desos.
Ainc rote ne viele ne nul psalterion
Ne vos pleüst si bien come li troi baron.

"Aalart and Guichart began a song, Gascon were the words, Limousin the melody, and Richard sings fairly the bass. Never rote, nor viol nor any psaltery would have delighted you so much

⁴² See especially A. Luchaire, *Les communes françaises à l'époque des Capétiens directs*, Paris, 1890.

⁴³ Introduction, p. LX.

⁴⁴ As to the "jongleurs" in general, see especially Faral, *Les Jongleurs en France au moyen âge*, Paris, 1910.

as the three barons." But Renaut is troubled and anxious, whereat Aalart says to him:

Ahi, Renaus, car chantes, ja as tu si bel ton;
Mult est longue la voie, si nos oblierom.

"Ah, Renaut, prithee sing, thou hast so fair a voice; long is the way, it will give us forgetfulness." We also find, in a "roman d'aventure," the *Roman de la Violette*, 1400-1405,⁴⁵ the hero Gerard, count of Nevers, disguised as a "jongleur," singing a stave of the chanson *Aliscans*:

Grans fu la cours en la sale a Loon.

But often the hero has a minstrel in his service, who occupies a position like that of Phemius or Demodocus in the *Odyssey*. Thus, William of Orange, in the *Chanson de Guillaume*, 1259ff., has a "juleor":

En tote France n'at si bon chanteür
Ne en bataille plus hardi fereür.
Il li set dire de geste les chançons:
De Clodoveu le premier roi Francur,
Ki creeit primes en Deu nostre seignur,
E de sun fiz Flovent le poigneür,
De dulce France qui il laissat l'onur,
De tuz les reis ki furent de valur
Tresqu'a Pepin, le petit poigneür,
De Charle Maigne, de Rollant sun nevou,
E de Girart, e d'Olivier le prou.

"In all France there is none so good a singer, nor a bolder smiter in battle. He knoweth how to tell over the songs of geste: of Clovis the first king of the Franks to believe on God our Lord, and of his son, Floovant the warrior, to whom he left the honor of sweet France, of all the kings of worth, down to Pippin, the short warrior, of Charles the Great, of Roland his nephew, and of Girart and of Oliver the valiant." In moments of depression, the minstrel sings to the heroes, just as Phemius does. So in *Huon de Bordeaux*, 8438ff.:

Le menestrel apela Huelins:
"Pren te viele, por Diu, biaux dos amis;

⁴⁵ This passage is reprinted in Bartsch et Horning, *La langue et la littérature françaises*, 394.

Après tous deus se convient resjoïr;
 Resbaudis nos, par amor je t'en pri." . . .
 Li menestreus ne se vot arester;
 Erraument a sa viele atempré,
 A trente cordes fait se harpe soner,
 Et li palais en tentist de tous les.

"Huon bade forth the minstrel: 'Take thy viol, fair sweet friend, for God's sake; after all woe it is meet to rejoice; delight us now, I pray thee, by thy love.' . . . The minstrel tarried not; straightway he tuned his viol and made the harp of thirty strings to twang, and the palace resounded round about."

But the most curious resemblance to Homeric usage in this connection occurs in the *Moniage Guillaume* I, 439ff.: William of Orange, who has retired to a monastery, is riding alone with a "vallet," who is also apparently a minstrel. He bids him sing.

Li vallés l'ot, prist soi a escrier,
 Bien hautement commencha a chanter:
 "Volés oïr de dant Tibaut l'Escler,
 Et de Guillaume, le marcis au cort nés,
 Si com il prist Orenge la chité,
 Et prist Orable a moillier et a per,
 Et Gloriete, le palais principer?

"The varlet heard him, began to shout and sing: 'Will ye hear about lord Tybalt the heathen, and about William, the short-nosed lord, how he took Orange the city, and took Orable for wife and peer, and Gloriete the lordly palace?'" Does not this remind one of Demodocus in the *Odyssey*, singing, at Odysseus' behest, a song of his deeds at Troy? I believe that in both cases the poet has ascribed the customs of his own day to the men of the heroic age. The position and actions of the minstrels, as they appear in the chansons, are in all respects true to the conditions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, whereas we have no positive evidence that they existed in the age of Charlemagne.

I turn now to the question of the historical character of the persons and events that appear in the epos. Here, as is well known, opinions of Homeric scholars diverge widely. Some believe that most of the heroes are of mythical origin, earlier tribal gods becoming men. Others affirm the essentially his-

torical character of the personages of the epos.⁴⁶ Students of the Old French epos are in this respect more fortunate than those of Homer. The historical records of the heroic age of France—covering roughly the reigns of Pippin, Charlemagne and Louis I—are numerous enough to enable us to test, to a certain degree, the accuracy of the legends. Here surprises await the incautious. The chansons have a specious air of true history, and purport of themselves to be such. The chanson form was indeed used in some cases for the writing of chronicles, either contemporaneous (*Chanson de la Croisade contre les Albigeois*, Garnier's *Vie de saint Thomas le Martyr*, Jordan Fantosme), or posterior and mixed with legendary elements (*Antioch, Jérusalem*, Cuvelier's *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*). Moreover, the legends recounted in the chansons were generally regarded, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as veracious history. The clerical chroniclers frequently give them a Latin form, or incorporate them in their records.⁴⁷ In the forged charters of the monasteries the names of the epic heroes appear as witnesses.⁴⁸ But appearances are deceptive. The stories told in the poems are mostly fiction, due, it seems, to the free creative imagination of the "jongleurs" working on a few names and events supplied by local tradition or by the clergy. Let us see now about how much "Wahrheit" there may be in the "Dichtung" of the French epic poets.

Out of the thousands of characters in the different chansons, M. Bédier has shown that fifty-five only can be positively identified with real persons of the heroic age.⁴⁹ But a majority of these are unimportant, playing a minor rôle in the legends. Of the chief heroes some twenty are historic; that is, they bear historic names. But how little does the epos know of the real career of the men it celebrates! What, for example, does it know of Pippin, save that he was father of Charlemagne and husband of a Bertha? What does it know of Roland, save that he was killed at Roncesvaux? Of William, save that he had a wife called Guibourc, fought with the Saracens and died in a monas-

⁴⁶ Especially W. Leaf; the chief upholders of the mythical theory are Bethe and Thomson.

⁴⁷ See Bédier, IV, 419-20.

⁴⁸ See Bédier, IV, 421-24.

⁴⁹ See Bédier, IV, 347ff.

tery? Of Louis the Pious, save that he was crowned at Aix during his father's lifetime? Of Girard "of Roussillon," save that he fought against a king named Charles and was a patron of the monasteries of Vézelay and Pothières? Charlemagne is naturally better known, but it would be totally impossible to reconstruct, from the data in the epos, a biography even remotely resembling that of Charles the Great. His character is not consistently drawn, and his deeds are mostly imaginary.

Let us take one of the minor figures. A personage who appears in many poems is Richard "li Vieuz" of Normandy,⁵⁰ without doubt identical with Richard I (†996). All that the poets know of him is that he was duke of Normandy and that he built the abbey of Fécamp. But they make him a contemporary of Charlemagne and give him a rôle not only inconsistent with history but with their own data. Thus, in the *Couronnement de Louis* ⁵¹ Richard dies in prison at Orléans under Louis I; in the *Roland* ⁵² he is killed, years before, in Spain by the Emir Baligant; in the *Chevalerie Ogier* ⁵³ he is slain, still earlier, by King Désier in Italy; which does not prevent the author of *Gormont et Isembart* ⁵⁴ from having him killed by Gormont at Cayeux. Suppose that we had no information about Richard of Normandy save what the chansons tell us, could we reconstruct his biography? Could we even tell when he lived? Yet his case seems to me quite the same as that of Glaucus or Idomeneus or Aias the Lesser, or other secondary figures in the Greek epos. For all the poets knew, Richard was just as real or as unreal as Naimes of Bavaria or Oliver or Bertrand "li Palazins" or numberless other secondary personages who have never lived outside the epos. If the records had disappeared, we simply could not tell which heroes are "historic," which are purely imaginary.

It should be noted that in no case in France do we find mythological figures becoming heroes. A few such figures are introduced into the chansons, such as Auberon the king of

⁵⁰ See Bédier, IV, 3-18.

⁵¹ *Couronnement de Louis*, 2218-21.

⁵² *Chanson de Roland*, 3470ff.

⁵³ *Chevalerie Ogier*, 5409ff.

⁵⁴ *Gormont et Isembart*, 140ff.

"faery" in *Huon de Bordeaux*, Malabron the "lutin" in *Gaufrey*, Wayland the Smith, as well as Gabriel, Michael and other Christian divinities. But they are always carefully distinguished from the heroes, who have nothing in common with them. Sometimes, as we shall see, the heroes become saints after death; but saints and divinities never become heroes. To a student of the French epos, the theories of Bethe, Thomson⁵⁵ and others, making Agamemnon and Achilles tribal gods and Penelope a divine waterfowl, seem unconvincing.

In fact, none of the warriors sung in the chansons is a tribal hero. At the time the "jongleurs" wrote, all tribal consciousness had been lost in the unity of Christian Europe. National consciousness—the pride of "la douce France" and the French name—does exist. It is asserted especially against the Saracen, the common enemy, as also against "Thiois et Lombartz," who are more or less despised. Another sort of race feeling, which we might expect to show itself—provincial patriotism⁵⁶—hardly appears either. The French provinces were all constituted under their local dynasties at the time of epic production, but there is little provincial feeling apparent in the chansons. A favorite theme is the revolt of a great noble against the King, but this noble, Girart, Renaut, Ogier or another, is not represented as the embodiment of local or provincial patriotism. Moreover, "Sagenverschiebung," if we care to call it that, does occur, but is not, as far as we can see, due to tribal migration. Thus William "of Orange," historically a Frank of the North and a cousin of Charlemagne, is always represented as a member of the family of Narbonne. This is hardly significant. The heroes, Roland, Girart, Ogier, William, are consistently represented as feudal lords, rulers over many vassals, all subject to one overlord Charlemagne, and all engaged in a struggle against an Eastern foe, the Saracens. Conditions may have been different in Greece, where tribal feeling was undoubtedly stronger than in feudal France. But after all, are not Achilles, Odysseus, Aias, Diomedes, likewise feudal lords, rulers over many vassals, all subject to one overlord, Agamemnon, and all engaged in a struggle against an Eastern foe?

⁵⁵ See especially Thomson, *Studies in the Odyssey*, chaps. 1, 2, 3.

⁵⁶ One apparent exception is *Gaydon*, which celebrates the Angevins and the dukes of Anjou.

Another interesting comparison with the Greek epos is supplied by the discovery of M. Bédier that in most cases the heroes and their exploits, so far as they are historical at all, are localized, and that this localization is connected with a church, a shrine or a pilgrimage route.⁵⁷ There existed formerly at least twenty-eight churches containing thirty-six tombs or shrines of persons who were important figures in the chansons. Twenty other churches could be named which preserved or helped to propagate legends about these heroes. And these churches or shrines were among the most important in Christian Europe, frequented by throngs of pious pilgrims. They included such well-known places of devotion as Saint James of Compostella, Saint Denis of France, Saint Peter's of Cologne, or such great abbeys as Gellone, Saint-Riquier, Fécamp, Stavelot and Vézelay. In many cases, the heroes were regarded as founders or patrons; their relics were venerated; in two instances at least they became saints and were worshipped as such. Nor did popular piety make any distinction between real and imaginary heroes. In the church of St. Romain at Blaye was shown the tomb of Roland (possibly authentic), as well as the tombs of Oliver and Fair Alda (who certainly never existed). In the abbey of Gellone (Hérault) was the shrine of Saint William, central figure of a whole cycle of legends and a historical figure. At Cologne and Dortmund were shrines of "Saint" Renaut, likewise the central figure of a cycle of legends, but by no means historical. The analogy between these shrines of sainted heroes in medieval Europe and the shrines of "divine" heroes in ancient Greece is certainly striking.

One of the most remarkable instances of this process is that of the shrine of Ogier in the abbey of Saint Faro at Meaux.⁵⁸ The monks of Saint Faro, in the tenth century, venerated as one of their founders a certain Othgerius, about whom they composed a short legend, the *Conversio Othgerii militis*. In this they represent Othgerius as an illustrious warrior who retired to their convent, persuaded Charlemagne to make them some valuable gifts, and died there "in the odor of sanctity." It cannot be proved that this Othgerius is historical, or that he

⁵⁷ See Bédier, IV, 403ff.

⁵⁸ See Bédier, II, 288ff.

had at first any connection with "Ogier li Danois," the epic hero. But when the latter had become celebrated, in the twelfth century, the identification was made; and about 1170 the monks of Saint Faro erected in honor of their hero a splendid chapel and monument, with mortuary statues of Ogier and his squire, and around them, under the vault of the chapel, six other figures from the chansons, Oliver, Roland, Alda, Turpin and others. Greek scholars have pointed out the possibility of ἡρώα of Agamemnon, Achilles or Helen replacing earlier shrines of autochthonic gods or goddesses. Is not the case of Ogier at Meaux a similar phenomenon?

Another point to be noticed in this connection is the relation that the epics themselves bear to the shrines, pilgrimages and festivals. M. Bédier has proved that the majority of the older and better chansons were probably composed for the delectation and instruction of the throngs of pilgrims who frequented the sanctuaries and the routes that led to them. Notably the *Chanson de Roland*⁵⁹ is localized on the "camino francés," the road to Compostella; and relics of the hero were shown in the churches along this route. In Bordeaux, for instance, an important station on the way, the ivory horn "olifant," given by Charlemagne after Roland's death to the church of Saint Seurin, was shown to the pilgrims, as is mentioned in the *Chanson*, 3684ff.:

Vint a Burdeles, la citet de valor,
Desur l'alter Saint Seurin le barun
Met l'oliphan plein d'or et de manguns;
Li pelerin le veient qui la vunt.

"He (Charlemagne) came to Bordeaux, the city of worth; on the altar of the noble Saint Seurin he placed the olifant, full of gold and coin; the pilgrims who go that way still see it."

Moreover, it is certain that at least two chansons, the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne* and *Fierabras*,⁶⁰ were composed for the festival called the "Lendit," held at Saint-Denis in June every year. This festival was instituted in 1109. Do not these facts recall what little we know as to the early history of the Homeric poems? They also celebrated heroes closely associated with

⁵⁹ See Bédier, III, 291ff.

⁶⁰ See Bédier, IV, 121ff.

old shrines; they also were sung at public festivals, the Panionia and the Panathenaia, which attracted great crowds of worshippers. Who knows but that at some period there may not have existed that sort of collaboration between priest and "aoidos" which certainly prevailed between "clerc" and "jongleur," and to which most of the "historical elements" in the French epos are due. Of course, all this is analogical conjecture, without evidential value.

In one or two particular instances of historic usage, other analogies could be adduced. I shall choose only one, the geographical name *Argos*.⁶¹ Homer employs this word in at least four different meanings. It denotes: 1, simply the city; 2, the whole Argolic plain, especially as the home of Agamemnon; 3, Southern Greece, the Peloponnesus; 4, Greece as a whole, both north and south. I leave to Greek scholars the explanation of this, but call attention to the fact that in the chansons the name *France* is used likewise with a threefold meaning, due to historic causes. It denotes—⁶²

1. All of Charlemagne's empire, in the widest sense, including German towns like Cologne and Aix-la-Chapelle; for example, *Moniage Guillaume II*, 4234:

France prendrons jusc'as pors de Coloigne.

Chanson de Roland, 36:

En France ad Ais s'en deit bien repairier.

2. It means the later "regnum francorum" of the Capetian kings; for example, *Girart de Roussillon*, §320: "C'est d'une fière bataille que je vous parle, dont France et Allemagne furent dépeuplées."

Huon de Bordeaux, 2362:

Mais ne retourt en France le regné.

3. It is used, more rarely, to connote the Ile-de-France, the scanty "royal domain" of the same Capetian kings. For ex-

⁶¹ See Leaf, *Homer and History*, 193ff.

⁶² See especially Hoeft, *France, Franceis und Franc im Rolandslied*, Strassburg, 1891.

ample, *Raoul de Cambrai*, 6150, Guerri, speaking at Arras, says:

Alons en France a bataille rengie.

Les Narbonnais, 1847ff., the sons of Aymeri are riding from the south:

Par mi Berri a force et a bandon
Vont chevauchant a coite d'esperon;
A Orlens vindrent, si passerent le pont,
Lors entrerent en France.

"Through Berri swiftly and strongly they go spurring as they ride; they came to Orléans and passed the bridge, then they entered France." To the poets of the twelfth century the connotations 2 and 3 were familiar, in daily use among their contemporaries; the broad meaning 1 was a matter of historical knowledge, more or less vague, of Charlemagne's empire.

In addition to the comparisons already mentioned, the chansons also contain considerable material for investigation of the methods and processes used in a period of epic production, and enable us to test, in some cases, the validity of internal evidence in questions of composition.⁶³ Owing to the general instability of their text and to the fact that no poet, scribe or minstrel ever felt obliged to reproduce his original without variation, we find sometimes several different poetic versions of the same epic legend. Early poems are often revised, interpolated, extended, abridged, or altogether rewritten. The most frequent cause of alterations of this nature was a change in metrical form. The early poems were written, for the most part, in ten- or twelve-syllabled verses, united into stanzas or "laisses" of varying length by assonance. A later fashion demanded full rime in place of assonance, and many poems were revised to introduce it. Other causes for change were involved in the desire to fit the poem into a cycle, or to please a new audience, or simply to tell the story in a different way. Expansion is more common than abridgement; and interpolation "in mediis rebus" is less usual than extension or revision at the beginning or the end of the poem. I intend now to cite some examples of these various alterations, taking care to choose such cases as present some

⁶³ See Cauer, 371ff.

analogy to those cited by Homeric critics as possibly occurring in the Iliad or the Odyssey.

First of all, the general tendency of the "remanieurs" is to make two verses grow where only one grew before. This is especially the case when assonance is turned into rime, but it also occurs where both versions had the same verse structure.⁶⁴ For example, our oldest version of the *Chanson de Roland*, contained in the Oxford manuscript *Digby 23*, is written in assonant ten-syllabled lines. Later rehandled texts introduce full rime, often by expanding a single verse to two or more. This is the way it is done:

Oxford, 3679	Muntet li reis e si hume trestuit
MS of Versailles	Monte li rois, o lui ses vavasors
	Ogiers et Naimés et Jofroiz l'amoros.
Oxford, 157	Bels fu li vespres e li soleils fut clers
Versailles	Biaus fu li jors, si prist a decliner
	Et li solaus si prist a esconser.

But in many cases this expansion is not dictated by the necessity of finding a rime. For example, take the passage *Huon de Bordeaux*, 2931ff.:

Tant ont ensanle le droit cemin erré
K'en un bosceage ont un homme trouvé,
La barbe ot longue desqu'au neu del baudré.

"So far have they together wandered along the straight way that in a wood they have found a man, who had a long beard reaching to the knot of his baldrick." Here MS b adds, uselessly:

Qui fu si fais com vous dire m'orrés:
Viez fu et fraile, si ot cent ans pasés.

"Who was formed as you will hear me tell: Old he was and frail, had passed his hundredth year."

So in the *Chevalerie Vivien*, 696:

Dist Vivien: "Ensin en est alei.
A nos parens fust toz jorz reprové.

⁶⁴ See especially Gautier, *Epopées*, I, 420ff.

"Said Vivien: 'Thus hath it gone. (Otherwise) it would have been always a matter of shame to our kindred.'" MSS A and B add the synonymous line:

Tenu nos fust toz jorz mes a vilté.

"Always it would have been imputed unto us as cowardice."

Ibid. 1096, Gerard comes to William and says:

En non Deu, sire, vos ne me ravisés?

Je suis vos nies, Gerars suis apellés.

To which MSS AB add the following line with genealogical information, of interest to us, but no news to William:

Filz sui Buevon et de Commarchis nez.

Is it not entirely possible that many "inorganic" lines in the Homeric poems, especially such as were rejected by the Alexandrian critics, may be due to the same process of expansion by copyists, such as, for example, A 139, B 528, N 256, N 350, λ 52-54, and many others.

Sometimes however the copyist abridged instead of expanding, even to a point hurtful to the sense. For example, in *Gaydon*, 4512ff. The youth Savari escapes from his wicked father and rows across a stream:

Tant a nagié li enfes son travel

Qu'arrivez est desoz un arbrissel.

"So far hath the youth rowed his bark that he hath arrived beneath a sapling." Then the next *laisse* begins immediately:

Savaris monte par desor Ataignant

"Savari mounts on Ataignant," without our being told who Ataignant is or where he was found. MS b adds, before the second *laisse*:

Vint a l'estable la ou sont li pontrel,

Sor Ataignant le bon cheval isnel

A mis la sele et le fraig a noel,

Puis est montés par l'estrier a noel.

"He came to the stable where the colts are; on Ataignant the good swift horse he put the saddle and graven bridle, and then mounted by the carved stirrup." These verses are necessary to

the sense and were evidently in the original, but MS a has dropped them. In the *Couronnement de Louis*, 590ff., all the manuscripts save one read (the Pope is addressing William of Orange):

“Ahi,” dit il, “nobles chevaliers,
Cil te guarisse qui en croiz fu dreciez!
Tel hardement ne dist mais chevaliers.
Ou que tu ailles, Jesus te puisse aidier!”

“Ah,” said he, “noble knight, may He save you who was raised on the cross! Never did knight utter such a bold saying. Wherever you go, may Jesus aid you!”

The MS C omits the second and third lines of this passage. They are not indispensable, but the text certainly runs more smoothly with them. It would of course require a very skilled analyst to determine where similar contractions or omissions have occurred in the text of Homer.

These are matters however which concern textual criticism rather than the problem of composition. But the alterations in the chansons often go much farther. A number of lines may be put into one *laisse*, or one or more *laises* may be interpolated. As a rule, such interpolations do not contribute much to the action. Some are typical of the minstrel profession. So, for example, in *Aliscans*, after line 4579 two manuscripts insert a passage of 44 lines, in which the “jongleur” interrupts the narrative to make an appeal to the generosity of his hearers.⁶⁵ This may be compared, roughly, to the so-called “Rhapsoden-zusaetze”⁶⁶ in Homer, as in II 102-112, Y 495-504. In *Gui de Bourgogne*, 191ff., a passage of 37 verses in one *laisse* is expanded in one manuscript into 166 verses divided among four *laises*. This interpolation contains a catalogue of the young heroes of the story, and so resembles, on a small scale, the catalogues in Homer.

A favorite stylistic device of the French poets, as well as the Homeric rhapsodes, was repetition or parallelism. Of course, in most cases, this was due to the original composer of the epic, and is no proof of late or composite authorship. But in some

⁶⁵ A device employed in the original version of *Huon de Bordeaux*, 4958ff., *Gui de Bourgogne*, 4135ff., and elsewhere.

⁶⁶ See Wilamowitz, *Die Ilias und Homer*, 87, 94ff., etc.

cases, as the codices show, the "remanieurs" insert passages of varying length repeating with some change of wording what had gone before. A good example of this, on a small scale, is found in *Huon de Bordeaux*, 416ff. The two sons of the Duchess of Bordeaux have been summoned to court by messengers and are about to set out. Their mother gives them much good advice at parting, especially urging them to be generous toward the envoys of the King.

"Et si prendés ces dous frans messagiers,
Pour palefrois lor donés grans destriers,
Et pour lor capes bons mantiax entailliés,
Et a chascun cent livres de deniers."

"And take these two free-born messengers, give them great war-horses for their palfreys, good slashed mantles for their capes, and unto each a hundred pounds in coin."

Here the older MSS end the speech and the youths ride away:

Cil s'en repairent baut et joiant et lié,
Desc'a Paris n'i ot regne tiré.

"They fare forth, bold and joyous and glad; nor did they draw rein till they reached Paris."

But one manuscript adds, after the mother's speech, a repetition quite in the taste of the time:

"Dame," dist Hues, "de gré et volentiers."
Ainsi a fait les mes aparillier:
Pour palefroï lor dona bon destrier,
Et pour lor capes bons mantiax entailliés,
Et a cascun cent livres de deniers.

"'Lady,' quoth Huon, 'gladly and willingly.' So he had the messengers guerdoned: for palfrey he gave them a good war-horse, and for their capes good slashed mantels, and unto each a hundred pounds in coin."

A longer interpolation of the same nature occurs in the rimed versions of the *Chanson de Roland*, after line 1482 of the Oxford version. At the beginning of the second battle in Roncesvaux, the archbishop Turpin exhorts the Christian warriors to fight boldly and to die as martyrs, whereat the French take heart and the fight begins. At this point the later versions insert three *laissez* in which Turpin repeats his exhortation in parallel stan-

zas with change of rime. Do not such parallelistic interpolations resemble the "Doppelfassungen" ⁶⁷ often pointed out in the Homeric poems, such as, for example, P 723-736 compared with P 737-746, or β 214-223 compared with α 281-292?

Interpolation of long passages in the chansons is less common, but more interesting, especially in cases where the passage interpolated is borrowed from, or suggested by, another epic. Thus the conclusion of *Hervi de Metz*, of 71 lines in the original version, is expanded to 1531 lines in two manuscripts, largely to effect a closer connection with the older poem, *Les Lorrains*, from which are borrowed directly several long passages. A redactor of the poem *Gerbert de Metz* has added to it, in one manuscript, a long episode which is really an adaptation, in 784 lines, of the entirely independent epic *Raoul de Cambrai*. This addition is designed to connect Raoul with the family of Gerbert. But the most interesting case of this kind is undoubtedly the interpolation found in MS Venice IV of the *Chanson de Roland*. This MS (14th century, in "Franco-Italian" dialect) contains up to the return of Charlemagne after the revenge for Roncesvaux a text quite similar to that of the Oxford version. At this point however it adds a long narrative of the siege and capture of Narbonne; after which it resumes the narrative found in the other versions. Now this interpolated episode is in substance a shortened and altered version of the chanson *Aymeri de Narbonne*. In view of the suggestion frequently made that the Homeric poems may contain parts or wholes of earlier independent epics, the *Doloneia* in K or the *Nestoris* in A for instance, these proceedings of the Old French redactors present considerable interest.⁶⁸ But it must be added that such passages are uncommon in the chansons. Long interpolations affecting the development of the narrative are rare. And we never find an example in Old French of a poem made up—patchwork fashion—of a number of earlier and shorter lays or epics. When a new poet wished to compose a personal version of an older song, he generally rewrote it entirely.

From the earliest times the chansons know and cite one

⁶⁷ See Wilamowitz, 13, 29, 152, 220, etc.

⁶⁸ See Wilamowitz, 61ff., 198ff., Murray, 201ff., and especially Muelder, *Die Ilias und ihre Quellen*, Berlin, 1910.

another, and many of the later ones are made up of motifs, characters, situations, speeches and lines borrowed from the earlier. The later poets presuppose constantly that their hearers (or readers) possess a knowledge of the old stories. These references to other epic legends are generally inserted by the poet himself into the narrative. So in *Gui de Nanteuil*, 7ff., we are told that Berengier, the "villain" of the story,

si fu niez Guenelon,
Celui qui de Rollant fist la grant traïson,
Qu'il vendi, comme fel, au roy Marcilion,
Dont furent mort a glesve li doze compengnon.

"was the nephew of Ganelon, the man who did the great treason of Roland, whom he sold, the knave, to King Marsile, wherefore the twelve comrades died by the sword," a clear allusion to the *Chanson de Roland*. In the *Chanson d'Antioch* (8, vss. 868ff.) the author refers to three well-known chansons (*Roland*, *Aspremont*, *Aliscans*) when he says:

Les grans peines qu'en ot Oliviers ne Rollans
Ne celes que souffri Iaumons ne Agolans,
Ne li ber Viviens quant fu en Aliscans,
Ne valut a cestui le pris de troi besans.

"The great woes that Roland and Oliver endured, and those which Eaumont and Agolant suffered, and the hero Vivien in Aliscans, were counted far less than this (the woe of the Crusaders at Antioch)."

In the very late chanson, *Hugues Capet*, there is an unmistakable reference to one of the earliest, *Gormont et Isembart*. Or again, in *Renaut de Montauban*, there is an allusion to Girart de Roussillon, interesting because it does not agree exactly with the story told in the chanson of that name. Similarly in Homer we find references made by the poet himself to other epic legends, for example, Od. 15, 225ff., story of Melampus, Il. 2, 628ff., story of Phyleus.

On the other hand, references to other legends put into the mouths of the heroes are less common in the chansons than in Homer. Some examples are found however. In *Jourdain de Blaye* (1426ff.) the hero Jourdain speaks of his grandfather

Ami, summarizing the story of the earlier chanson *Amis et Amiles*, exactly as Glaukos speaks of his grandfather Bellerophon in Iliad Z.

Mis aieuls fu Amis li bons guerriers
 Qu'ocist Hardré le cuivert renoié
 En la bataille por Amile le fier,
 Por Belissant qui ot le cuer legier
 Fille Charlon le fort roi droiturier.

"My grandfather was Ami the good warrior, who slew Hardré, the base renegade, in fight in behalf of the proud Amile for Belissant's sake, the light-hearted daughter of Charles, the strong and righteous king." So, Charlemagne, in the beginning of the chanson, *Huon de Bordeaux*, sums up, apropos of his son Charlot, the story of the *Chevalerie Ogier*, very much as Nestor, in Iliad A 670ff., recounts the deeds of his youth.

Direct borrowings, of one chanson from another, are not uncommon, though it is impossible here to cite more than one or two examples. They begin very early. The author of the *Chanson de Guillaume* has borrowed the motif of the "belles mains" from the *Roland*. *Antioch*, the *Couronnement de Louis* and *Aliscans* "lift" a comparison from the *Roland*, just as we may suppose that the rhapsodes constantly "lifted" similes one from the other.⁶⁹ As for the more extensive borrowings in the later chansons, I can only refer to what is said by the editors of the poems in their introductions.⁷⁰

While the chansons de geste thus give evidence that epic poets indulge freely in borrowings and that they do not hesitate to make changes of all kinds, they do not show that an epic is ever constructed out of detached lays or ballads, nor yet made up by the amalgamation of several earlier ones. They also show that it is difficult to detect late and early parts, additions or interpolations, by internal evidence alone. We have seen that such increments do exist in numbers, but if we did not have the manuscripts it is doubtful if their existence could be proved. Some of the tests used by critics seem from this point of view

⁶⁹ See Murray, 208ff.

⁷⁰ See especially Stimming, Introd. to his edition of *Boeve de Haumtone*, pp. CLXXXIX ff., G. Paris, Introd. to *Orson de Beauvais*, LV ff., Suchier, Introd. to *Les Narbonnais*, LVI ff.

fallacious. Contradictions, incoherencies and improbabilities, such as have been pointed out in Homer as proof of composite structure, are found in abundance in the chansons in parts where multiple composition can hardly have existed. Slight contradictions in successive passages, such as have been cited as occurring,⁷¹ e. g. Z 448 as compared with 476ff., I 308ff. and 630ff., A 366 and 392, are not uncommon in the chansons and frequently more glaring than anything in Homer. A striking example—change of name—is found in *Huon de Bordeaux*, where Huon's renegade uncle is called first (l. 3881) Guillaume, but becomes (3964) Oedes. In *Gaufrey* we find (p. 180) a "roi de Turfanie" who becomes, two pages farther on, "roi de Piconie." In *Aspremont* (3314) a company of "nos François" is said to number 4000, fourteen lines farther the same band is said to contain 3000. The most striking contradiction of all, the reappearance of a hero killed in a previous fight (as Pylaimenes, killed by Menelaos, E 578 f., turns up alive in N 658) occurs in at least three chansons: namely, in *Elie de Saint-Gilles*, where Corsaut de Tabarie, killed v. 341, reappears alive v. 2428; in *Aye d'Avignon*, where the traitor Auboin is slain v. 736, but resumes his plottings v. 2721; in *Les Narbonnais*, where Gautier le Tolosant, killed v. 7560, reappears v. 7993. Epic minstrels, in works intended to be sung or recited publicly in sections, lay no great stress on consistency or probability. Offenses against either passed unnoticed by their hearers.

Another feature of Homeric style, often adduced as a proof of multiple composition, repetition of messages verbatim, is found constantly in all the chansons, from the earlier (for example, *Chanson de Guillaume*, 636-689, Vivien's summons to William, repeated almost textually by the messenger Girart, 979-1003) to the latest (for example, *Hervi de Metz*, 6415ff., repeated with slight changes 6446ff.). This stylistic peculiarity seems to be natural to such productions, affording no evidence as to authorship.

Repetition of one or several lines, or of whole passages, often noticed in Homer and frequently cited as proof of copying by the "diasceuaists," is also frequent in the chansons, in parts where there is not the slightest evidence of rehandling or addi-

⁷¹ See Cauer, 398ff.

tion by the copyists or redactors. Of this I shall cite examples taken from only one chanson, which shows no trace of being treated by "remanieurs," the *Mort Garin*. Here, for instance, we find line 2559

li fers fu chaus, ne pot l'acier sofrir,

repeated, line 3311,

chaus fu li fers, ne pot l'acier sofrir.

Ibid., lines 2635-36,

Tant mar i fustes, frans chevaliers jentis;
Qui vos a mort, il n'est pas mes amis,

are repeated textually, lines 3364-65, and with a slight variant, lines 4796-97:

Tant mar i fustes, frans chevaliers gentis,
Car vos estiez mes pers et mes amis.

Similarity in situation or in emotion seems to produce similarity in expression, just as with Homer.

Repetition in incident or in motif, frequently objected to in Homer, recurs likewise in the chansons, in passages where no evidence of reworking is otherwise visible. The double council of the gods in *Odyssey* *a* and *ε* finds a parallel in the double council of the monks of Aniane in the *Moniage Guillaume II*, 316-343 and 406-439. The three casts at Odysseus ⁷² (*ρ* 462ff., *σ* 395 ff., *ν* 301 ff., can be compared to the three adjurations of Oliver in the *Chanson de Roland* (1049ff., 1059ff., 1070ff.). Many more resemblances of this kind could be cited.

Such analytical criticism as the Homeric poems have been subjected to has been applied to several of the chansons, with much the same results. By means of internal discrepancies, lack of motivation, and similar criteria, critics have endeavored to distinguish old and new parts. Hardly ever did any two of these "chorizontes" agree, and since the appearance of M. Bédier's work, they have largely given up this pastime. In one case at least we are able to test their conclusions. The *Chevalerie Vivien* and *Aliscans* were long known to form a single epic, in which appeared many discrepancies and difficulties. The

⁷² See Cauer, 490ff.

critics exercised themselves on these, constructing hypothetically the original version of the legend. Then in 1903 came the discovery of the *Chanson de Guillaume*, an authentic "original" version. It confirmed few if any of the results which the critics had reached by internal evidence, presenting in fact a version of the first part of the story which had been entirely unsuspected. It also showed that in some cases the older versions were ruder, more careless and incoherent, than the later, some of the geographical and other difficulties that appear in the *Guillaume* being smoothed away in the later forms. Such a case as this is instructive. When Homeric scholars attempt to show by analytical criticism, as for instance Wilamowitz does,⁷³ just what parts of the *Iliad* were written by Homer, what parts he took from earlier sources, what parts were added by later editors, the student of the chansons can only envy his certainty. The latter poems prove the fact of epic reworkings, interpolations and changes, but they do not afford us any criteria for distinguishing them.

The progress of epic composition, as it went on in medieval France, can be well illustrated by comparing the three forms of the legend of Vivien, to which I have alluded before. The earliest of the three, the *Chanson de Guillaume*, is a poem of 3557 lines, composed early in the twelfth century if not before, not distinguished by a coherent plot or faultless narrative, but containing many superb single scenes and episodes. This was rewritten and expanded by a later poet, of about 1180, into two connected poems, the *Chevalerie Vivien* and *Aliscans*, of 1949 and 8570 lines respectively. In these the sequence of events of the *Guillaume* is preserved, some scattered lines of the original form appearing here and there. The narratives and speeches are lengthened, some new traits are introduced and the geography is altered. A little later, about 1200, a poet of Dammartin-sur-Aube, Herbert le Duc, took many of the characters and the opening scenes of *Aliscans* for the foundation of a new chanson, into which he introduced, following the taste of the time, some new "romantic" elements, and made some important stylistic changes. This version, *Fouques de Candie*, of 18,000 lines, was much admired in courtly circles. It pre-

⁷³ See especially Wilamowitz' analysis of the *Iliad*, 512ff.

serves many of the persons, some situations and motifs, of the earlier versions, but is otherwise an original creation. I have sometimes imagined that an original *Achilleis* may have been expanded and rewritten, by a poet of far greater genius than Herbert le Duc, in much the same fashion.

In conclusion, it may be said that I do not insist on the evidential value of any of these parallels. "Analogies do not run on all fours." Our knowledge of medieval France, the scene of a great religious, social and literary development, is extensive, though incomplete. Our knowledge of pre-classical Greece, especially Ionia, likewise the scene of a great philosophical and artistic development, is only fragmentary. The conditions that surrounded the birth of the epos in the two cases may have been totally different. Nevertheless, the manners and morals of the epic heroes, the motifs and structure of the poems, are so similar that I believe that some importance can be ascribed to these comparisons. Classical scholars must take them for what they are worth. Accepting the chansons as representative epics, however, their answer to the problem of origins is, I think, clear and unmistakable. They are not the result of a long evolution, but arise with comparative suddenness when the social and cultural conditions are ripe, in a period of creative intellectual activity. They then undergo a process of rehandling, copying and alteration, which may last several centuries. Different strata of cultural evolution cannot be distinguished in them individually. They are supposedly true narratives relating to a distant and heroic past, but the figures and costumes of that past are conceived in terms of the present; the heroes dress, act and talk like the poet's contemporaries. The little true history in the poem cannot be distinguished from the fiction. It is rarely if ever possible to detect rehandling by internal evidence alone. So much, I think, the chansons reveal in regard to their own origins.

A final difference between the Old French and the Greek epos has thus far been mentioned only indirectly, and that is the fact that France produced no literary masterpiece. Doubtless, the *Roland*, the *Guillaume*, the *Girart* and a few other chansons are marked by a stern beauty of thought and expression worthy of all praise. But they have never been cherished by their own people, nor accepted by later literary sentiment, as the *Iliad*

and Odyssey have. Some scholars, like the late Gaston Paris, have explained this difference as due to the greater creative genius of the Greek mind. But if we consider what was actually accomplished along other lines of creative activity in medieval France, if we think of the crusades, the communes, the schools of philosophy, above all of the marvellous and original art of the great cathedrals, we can hardly doubt that creative genius was as abundant in twelfth-century France as in Homeric Greece. Simply, it did not take a literary form. The genius of Homer, or whoever the poet or poets were who created the Iliad and Odyssey, doubtless with much use of preexisting material, as we have seen that the chanson poets created their epos,—that is the main explanation of this difference. To mark the character of that genius, to show by analogy how it developed and worked, that, it seems to me, is the chief contribution of the chansons to the study of the Homeric poems.

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